

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress  
2nd Session

Vote No. 32

March 13, 1996, 7:44 p.m.  
Page S-1963 Temp. Record

## OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS/Striking the Emergency Designations

**SUBJECT:**      **Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, II . . . H.R. 3019. Cochran motion to table the Gramm modified amendment No. 3490 to the Hatfield modified substitute amendment No. 3466.**

### ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 55-45

**SYNOPSIS:**      As introduced, H.R. 3019, the Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, II, will make rescissions and will provide appropriations for fiscal year 1996 for the five regular appropriations bills that have not yet been signed into law (three of those bills have been vetoed, one has been stalled by a Senate Democratic filibuster on its conference report, and one has been stalled by a Senate Democratic filibuster against even beginning its consideration).

The Hatfield modified substitute amendment contains the text of S. 1594, as reported, which is the Senate's version of the bill. The amendment would increase spending by \$1.2 billion over the House-passed amount, and would create a \$4.8 billion contingency fund to accommodate part of the additional \$8 billion in spending requested by President Clinton (funds would not be released unless offsets were identified and enacted; President Clinton did not ask for or identify any means of paying for his increased spending proposals). As amended, the contingency fund was reduced due to increased education spending with offsets (see vote No. 27).

**The Gramm modified amendment** would reduce all Government non-exempt, non-defense discretionary spending across the board by the amount necessary (.53 percent) to offset the non-defense discretionary spending in title II of this Act, which will provide \$1.250 billion in emergency disaster assistance spending. (The emergency spending in title II is not offset, but it is within the Appropriation Committee's overall 602(a) budget allocation for fiscal year 1996).

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Cochran moved to table the Gramm amendment. Generally those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

**Those favoring** the motion to table contended:

At the beginning of the year, Congress estimates how much money it is going to collect and spend in a year, and it then sets

(See other side)

YEAS (55)			NAYS (45)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (10 or 19%)	Democrats (45 or 96%)		Republicans (43 or 81%)	Democrats (2 or 4%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Campbell	Akaka	Inouye	Abraham	Inhofe	Feingold		
Chafee	Baucus	Johnston	Ashcroft	Kassebaum	Kohl		
Cochran	Biden	Kennedy	Bennett	Kyl			
Craig	Bingaman	Kerrey	Bond	Lott			
D'Amato	Boxer	Kerry	Brown	Lugar			
Dole	Bradley	Lautenberg	Burns	Mack			
Hatfield	Breaux	Leahy	Coats	McCain			
Jeffords	Bryan	Levin	Cohen	McConnell			
Kempthorne	Bumpers	Lieberman	Coverdell	Murkowski			
Stevens	Byrd	Mikulski	DeWine	Nickles			
	Conrad	Moseley-Braun	Domenici	Pressler			
	Daschle	Moynihan	Faircloth	Roth			
	Dodd	Murray	Frist	Santorum			
	Dorgan	Nunn	Gorton	Shelby			
	Exon	Pell	Gramm	Simpson			
	Feinstein	Pryor	Grams	Smith			
	Ford	Reid	Grassley	Snowe			
	Glenn	Robb	Gregg	Specter			
	Graham	Rockefeller	Hatch	Thomas			
	Harkin	Sarbanes	Helms	Thompson			
	Heflin	Simon	Hutchison	Thurmond			
	Hollings	Wellstone		Warner			
		Wyden					

#### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

#### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

spending limits under which it must stay unless an emergency arises that requires greater spending. Emergencies are not budgeted for ahead of time because no one knows ahead of time what those emergencies will be, or if indeed there will be any such emergencies. The right to increase spending to meet emergencies was carefully negotiated in 1990 when our current budget rules were adopted, and we believe, on balance, that the right has not been abused, at least since Republicans took control of Congress. The temptation of course exists to declare that any extra spending that one favors is "emergency" spending that can be added to the deficit, but the voters in 1990 let it be known what they thought of Members who followed that course. The emergency spending that is in this bill really is necessary to meet natural disasters that have occurred in various parts of the country. When a region is struck by a natural disaster such as a flood or a hurricane that causes extensive damage that is too great for the region to pay for by itself, the Federal Government should help. Our colleagues have said that it should only give aid if it finds a way to pay for that help. Their analogy is that if a child breaks his leg, his family will budget to meet the unexpected expense of fixing his leg. The better analogy is that they will rush him to the doctor whether they have cash on hand or not, and they will put the bill on their credit card. With that said, we note that it is not fair to call the emergency spending in this bill deficit spending. Even without offsetting this emergency aid the appropriations cap will not be exceeded. The appropriators have done their part this session--they have reduced spending overall by between \$21 billion and \$22 billion. When one looks at the total picture, it is obvious that these emergency appropriations are not excessive.

A final point that must be kept in mind is that President Clinton is determined to spend more money. He has already threatened to veto this bill because it does not contain the full \$8 billion in additional spending that he has demanded. If we were to provide emergency aid, and then cut other spending to pay for it, President Clinton would be even more likely to veto this bill. Maybe President Clinton is just playing politics, and intends to veto anything we send him, but it has certainly been our experience that he is more likely to sign anything that spends more money. We can stay under our budget cap without offsetting this emergency aid, and by doing so we increase the chances of getting the President's signature. Therefore, we must urge the defeat of the Gramm amendment.

**Those opposing the motion to table contended:**

If the Gramm amendment does not pass the children of America will be paying interest on the \$1.2 billion in emergency spending in this bill for the rest of their lives. We are not saying by any means that we should not provide emergency spending--when catastrophes strike and overwhelm a local community's ability to recover, the Federal Government should step in with help. For us, though, it is mind-boggling illogical to say that when it does it is absolutely imperative that it borrow the money and leave the debt for our children to pay.

No family would ever pay for emergencies by amassing debts to be passed on from generation to generation. Families, like governments, face unexpected, expensive emergencies. Unlike the Federal Government, though, when a family has an emergency situation it works the cost of that situation into its budget. As a hypothetical example, let us suppose that the Brown family plans within a given year to save enough money to buy a new refrigerator and to take a 1-week summer vacation. Now suppose that little Johnny Brown falls down the stairs and breaks his arm. They now must pay \$700 to set his arm and to pay other attendant medical expenses. In this situation, the family will not put the bill on its credit card and forget about it--it will work the cost into its budget. Maybe it will cancel the vacation; maybe it will put off buying the new refrigerator. One thing the Brown family will not do is the only thing that Congress has typically been willing to do--borrow the money and refuse to adjust its spending plans to pay for it.

Some Senators have said that this analogy proves their point because a family would rush its son to the hospital whether they had cash available or not, and would put the bill on its credit card. These Senators are missing the point: that charge would not stay on the credit card that year; the family would change its spending plans to raise funds to pay off the debt. We admit that our analogy, like all analogies, limps to an extent, because the "emergencies" we are talking about on this bill and on other emergency bills are not nearly as time-sensitive as the need to rush a child to a doctor. In some cases, we are talking about responses to "emergencies" that are years after the fact. In most cases, a minimum of several months intervenes before Congress appropriates emergency funds, which are typically for rebuilding efforts. Given the amount of time that Congress has available, there is no excuse for it to fail to find offsets for emergency spending. Further, our analogy has a soft spot because the emergencies that the Federal Government responds to comprise a much smaller percentage of its budget. For instance, the \$1.2 billion in funding in this bill is about only 1/1500 of the total Federal budget. One-fifteenth hundredth of the Brown family's budget, assuming an income of \$30,000 per year, would only be \$20. In other words, the average family can and does budget for emergencies that comprise large parts of its annual income, but our colleagues are unwilling to make the Federal Government budget for an expense that for a typical family would be the equivalent of \$20.

The amount of money we are talking about here is small by Federal Government standards, but the principle is extremely important. In prior Congresses, Republicans had great difficulty in stopping Democrats from abusing the emergency clause to increase spending. In some cases the Democrats succeeded. This new Republican Congress, so far, has been different. We should not change course now. Therefore, we strongly urge our colleagues to join us in voting against the motion to table the Gramm amendment.

**MARCH 13, 1996**

**VOTE NO. 32**

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